

9/20/05

To whom it may concern,

On September 19th 2005, Casey, Shaunna, and myself (Alisha) went up to the hill around 5:00pm to look at the bar. Soon as we pulled up it was apparent that the 8 foot swell was here, and there was no way we would be able to make our trips for the next day, September 20th. Casey called Scott right away to tell him to call our people to cancel. While we were at the hill we found out Richard Oba was still out on his tuna trip, and was going to try to come home after the tide change. The Strike Zone crew was concerned about Richard's possible crossing so we called Pat Sullivan and had him meet us at the hill at 8:00pm.

Around 8:00pm Scott, Casey, Shaunna, and myself met Pat Sullivan who had a VHF radio with him. Pat soon hailed Captain Richard Oba on the Sydney Mae II, and asked for his current position. Richard said he was about 1.5 miles from the red can. Pat asked Richard what his intentions were. Richard said he would like to come home tonight, and that the bar looked fine to him; it was passable. Pat warned Richard that he was on the bar all day and watched it build. Pat said the bar was very bad and he advised Richard to go to Charleston. The conversation between Pat and Richard was over.

Shortly after 8:30pm Casey, Shaunna, and myself spotted what we believed to be the lights of a boat. The boat lights were just a hair south of the stationary red light at the tip of the south jetty. The lights appeared to be bouncing around a lot and moving at a fairly fast speed, which we only seen for a matter of seconds. To me it looked like the boat was entering the south hole. Shortly after the lights disappeared we all heard a very loud crash, which we thought to be a boat hitting the rocks or being crushed by a wave. We were all concerned about the noise we heard so Casey called the Umpqua Station and expressed her concerns. The person she talked to on the phone said, no it couldn't be Richard because Richard told them he was going to cross the Charleston bar instead.

We were all still puzzled so we started talking about what just happened. About five minutes after Casey called the Umpqua Station, a bright white/ blue flashing light was spotted by Scott, which was a little bit south of the south jetty. The flashing light was not stationary, it was drifting south. This light was thought to be an EPIRB. Soon as Scott spotted the light, Pat called the Umpqua Station on the VHF. The station then sent a person to the tower to try to locate the flashing light we were all watching. The person at the tower could not locate the light. Pat called the Umpqua Station again and told them to get a motor life boat out there now.

The F/V Fiskin was anchored a ways south of the bar and heard what was being said on the radio. He pulled anchor and headed toward the flashing light. Mean while the motor life boat was under way. Soon the life boat was in the ocean, and a deployed life raft and EPIRB was found along with Captain Richard Oba and one other person.

I believe that Richard's intention was to cross the Umpqua River Bar on the night of September 19th. I don't understand why he would risk his life and his passengers lives. I think Richard's intentions were very wrong and negligent as a newly licensed skipper myself. I cannot understand why he ignored the restrictions and approached the south hole.

Sincerely, Alisha Beck

[REDACTED]